COMMANDER NAVY REGION HAWAII
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Motorcycle Safety Requires the Cooperation of Every Driver on the Road

Motorcycling: A SANE CHOICE FOR TRANSPORTATION?

Think about it. Is motorcycling a sane form of transportation compared to a four-wheeled car or truck? The obvious answer would be NO, you gotta be crazy to ride a motorcycle. Data varies but generally concur that while motorcyclists account for only 1-2% of vehicles registered, motorcyclists are 7% more likely to be involved in an accident and for an equal amount of miles driven, motorcyclists are about 40 times more likely(than 4-wheeled vehicle drivers) to be involved in a fatality. Even if a motorcycle driver is not killed during an accident, the driver and/or his passenger will usually be seriously injured. Understand this: motorcycling is an inherently dangerous activity. You may, at any moment, die.

In this month's article and in future articles, the Regional Safety Department will examine an aspect of Traffic Safety involving Motorcycling. This month's topic examines "why the general auto driving population must understand the characteristics of motorcycles and their riders" even if they do not operate motorcycles themselves.

FIRST, AN INTRODUCTION TO MOTORCYCLING (THE GOOD STUFF)

Why do people ride motorcycles in spite of the negative publicity surrounding motorcycling? There are many valid reasons:

- Motorcycles are fun. The feeling of oneness with the machine can be compared to flying in an open environment. Freedom.
- Motorcycles need less gas, oil and generally cost less to maintain.
- They're easier to find parking spaces for and take up less space in the garage.
- Motorcycles generally have a lower purchase price.
- Certain motorcycles convey an automatic image of "coolness" or "badness" which appeals to certain types of motorcycle riders.
- Motorcycling is often an enthusiast's sport and the challenge comes from the unique mental and coordinated physical skills necessary to operate the machine.
- There are many types of motorcycles to choose from to suit the individual needs and desires of motorcyclists.
- Motorcycling touring, either with a group or solo, may be both a recreational or social activity.
- Motorcycling makes commuting fun(motorcyclists in Hawaii can legally use the express lane) and coming to work may become the highlight of the day.

Whatever the reasons, an increasing number of motorcyclists have decided to accept the high element of risk. Some of the evident reasons for this increased risk in operating a motorcycle as compared to a car are:

- Motorcycles are much smaller and have tiny lights compared to cars. This makes them harder to see.
- Motorcycles are lighter and therefore more susceptible to external forces like wind, road surfaces and even slight bumps from cars or trucks.
- Motorcycles have two wheels and are therefore not as stable as a four-wheeled vehicle when moving. In a skid, a car will probably not roll whereas a motorcycle is highly susceptible to ending up on its side.
- Motorcycles do not have protective air-bags and are not enclosed by reinforcement and exterior metal sheathing. Motorcycle riders are therefore extremely vulnerable when impacted by another solid object.

The most important differences between four-wheeled vehicles and motorcycles are stability, visibility and vulnerability. Given these inequities, why is the automobile driver responsible for the safety of a motorcyclist who willingly chooses to accept the high element of risk?

AUTO DRIVERS ARE AT FAULT IN MANY MOTORCYCLE ACCIDENTS

Statistics generally concur that approximately 75% of all motorcycle accidents involve another vehicle (usually a passenger automobile). Of these accidents between a motorcycle and a passenger vehicle, a passenger vehicle violating the right-of-way of a motorcycle caused 66%. Translated, this means that an approximate total of 50% of all motorcycle accidents were the fault of the four-wheeled vehicle driver. Three major factors seem to predominate in these accidents caused by the drivers of passenger vehicles.

First is the relative difficulty of "seeing" a motorcycle in traffic or hidden by a vehicle's blind spot. The frontal

profile of a motorcycle is a fairly narrow dimension and contributes to the difficulty of seeing it.
Second, a motorcycle's speed is difficult to judge as it approaches a passenger vehicle. Many auto driver's have claimed that they thought a motorcycle was way back(when they last checked)and suddenly became aware of the same motorcycle next to them when changing lanes, etc.

Thirdly, car drivers tend to be inattentive with regard to motorcyclists and expect collisions to take place only with other cars or trucks. In this age of the cellular phone and passenger car gadgetry, we can probably expect more inattention and a lack of focus on road conditions ahead by auto drivers.

CONCLUSION

Being aware of the basic factors which cause auto drivers to violate a motorcyclist's right-of-way should help these offending auto drivers to lower the high risk of motorcycling.

There are many accidents in which the motorcyclist is using the road responsibly and minimizing his own risks, but is still put at risk because a car driver fails to recognize a potential hazard. Auto drivers as well as motorcyclists all share in the responsibility of driving defensively given the extreme vulnerability of a motorcyclist.

Think, "motorcycle" even if you do not see one or drive one.

LEAD AND ASBESTOS TRAINING

The monthly safety training topics for February are lead and asbestos awareness.

Lead and asbestos awareness training is required for maintenance and custodial personnel who may encounter asbestos containing material (ACM) and lead containing material (LCM) during their everyday work task.

This training is also required for personnel who work in and around identified ACM and LCM managed in place in the facility in which they work which technically includes all Navy personnel.

The major objectives of the training are:

- To provide the trainees with the ability to identify the suspected or labeled ACM and LCM.
- Recognize potentially hazardous situations involving ACM and LCM.
- Avoid and minimize disturbance of ACM and LCM through proper methods and work practices.
- Contact appropriate personnel.
- Follow established procedures when asbestos or lead related concerns or emergencies arise.

Ensure that the documentation of your training is forwarded to the Safety Department via your command safety representative.

Be Safe!!

Friendly Training Reminders
(At Bldg. X-11 unless otherwise noted)
Safety Indoctrination
PWC/PACDIV
10 Feb - 0800-0930
Lockout/Tagout
12 Feb - 0715-1100
Respirator Training
Bldg. 40
19 Feb - 0730-0930
Motorcycle ERC Course
20 Feb - 0700-1100
AAA Training
23 Feb - 0700-1500
Fall Protection Training
24 Feb - 0730-1100

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(808) 474-3953, Ext 358
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Hazard Control Division
(808) 474-3953, Ext 355
(808) 474-3953, Ext 357
Technical Division
(808) 474-3953, Ext 365